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THE NORWEGIAN LAW CONCERNING CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK, AND ABSTRACT OF REPORT TO THE STORTHING. By the Councillor of State, *Castberg*. Trans. by *H. Sundby-Hansen* for the Legislative Committee of the Chicago Woman's Club, Woman's City Club, Chicago Woman's Aid, and the Eugenics Education Society. 1917. Pp. 37.

At this time when the mind of America is perhaps more than ever directed towards the problem of the unmarried mother and her child, any material which gives us access to foreign experience in this field is valued. Students of social conditions are thus indebted to the Legislative Committees of the Chicago Woman's Club, the Woman's City Club, the Chicago Woman's Aid and the Eugenics Education Society for a translation of the Norwegian law made by H. Sundby-Hansen and published by them. The pamphlet contains an abstract of the report to the Storting by Councillor of State Castberg in January, 1914, and the law as finally adopted by the Storting in April, 1915, to become effective January 1st, 1916.

The introduction to this important piece of legislation states the case of the unmarried mother and her child. Special emphasis is placed upon facts with which students of the problem are everywhere familiar, and attention is drawn to the weakening of the rising generation through the economic pressure brought to bear upon the homes in which the illegitimate child matures. Particularly important for the health of the child is the mother's physical condition just before and after confinement. The illegitimate child has a mother but legally no father and thus the responsibility and care of this child falls disproportionately upon the mother. It is well known that the mortality rate among children born out of wedlock is extremely high, a Norwegian report stating that for the period from 1896 to 1900 eighty-nine children to every one thousand legitimate births died during the first year of their life, whereas one hundred and seventy-seven children of every one thousand illegitimate births died during their first year. The maximum death rate among the illegitimate is reached in the third month, which is the time when a child most needs the care and nursing of its mother. Inadequate legal provision is undoubtedly responsible for much of this neglect.

After submitting the various questions involved in the prospective legislation to the higher local authorities and to the members of the poor commission of each parish in 1913, the well known law was introduced into the Storting in 1915. Among its main provisions are the following:

Children born out of wedlock have the same legal status in relation to the father as to the mother.

The child is entitled to support, care and education, both from its father and its mother. In the rearing of the child the economic condition of the most favorably situated of the parents is taken into account.

The child may be placed either in the care of the mother or the father. The parent who has the custody assuming the same duty as

though the child were born in wedlock. The duty of the other parent is to contribute financially.

If neither of the parents has the custody of the child a guardian is appointed, whereupon both parents contribute to its support. A guardian can be appointed at any time at the request of the mother, who sees to it that the child receives proper care.

In regard to the determination of parenthood and of obligation to support we find the following provisions:

The unmarried woman should make a statement in regard to the parenthood of her unborn child three months before she expects to be confined. The making of a false declaration concerning the identity of the father is punishable by fine or imprisonment for not more than two years. Upon receipt of this declaration the Sheriff shall immediately inform the Governor, who issues a summons for the father. Settlement out of court is prohibited. If the man admits access to the mother during the given period he may be declared the father of her child. If the court be unable to decide the question of fatherhood, the man becomes liable for the support of the child if it can be shown that he had intercourse with the mother during the given time.

The old conception of "*nise plurium concubentium*" is abolished and if several men have had intercourse with the woman they become collectively responsible for the support of the child. This support must be paid until the child reaches its sixteenth year, and if one of the parents is economically unable to bear any part of the expense the other can be required to pay for the entire support.

The final act of this legislation in regard to the child born out of wedlock is to give it the same right of inheritance as the legitimate child possesses.

Our opinion in regard to this legislation will indicate whether we are more concerned in our thinking with the condition of the mother or with the condition of the child. Regardless of the experience of various communities there will be many who are of the opinion that to lighten the burden which weighs upon the illegitimate child will tend merely to the increase of illegitimacy. To them it will seem that any alleviation of such a child's condition will be followed by the lowering of standards in regard to feminine chastity with its normal consequences. Such legislation when it concerns itself with inheritance will be looked upon as a direct attack upon the family in that it deprives the legitimate child of what is his by right. It is certainly open to question as to whether the hardship which an illegitimate child endures, acts as a deterrent upon any woman in a moment of passion. There may be various opinions in regard to this point. The question which greater number of social workers, however, are now coming to consider important concerns itself not so much with the sexual morality of the mother, for they feel that such a quality is difficult to define, or with the supposed danger to the home, for they believe that the family is more deeply rooted in human nature than has been recognized, but with the all important future of the child. To the writer

that social policy is good which while minimizing the cost to the State is yet of greatest benefit to the child.

One should remember that the illegitimate child is born **with the same chances of mental and physical development as is the legitimate child of its own social stratum. The large percentage of criminals and prostitutes who were born out of wedlock is due more to society's attitude towards them than to any congenital weakness. Again illegitimate children when removed from their environment show developmental histories no better and no worse than the legitimate children with whom they are placed. With these things in mind, it would appear that such legislation as Norway has adopted might safely tend towards alleviating the condition of the illegitimate child, towards removing a stigma for which the child is in no way responsible, and towards a saner attitude in regard to sex ethics. Surely the mother does not benefit by any of the legislation cited above, and the child far from depriving other children of their due, is thus just beginning to secure its birthright.**

Grace Church, Providence.

PERCY G. KAMMERER.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS INFORMATION SERVICE. Bulletin. **Third annual** cumulation, Oct. 1916-Oct. 1917; edited by *Lillian Henley*, assisted by *Katherine J. Middleton*. Pp. 490. N. Y.: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1917. Price on application.

A comparison of this issue with the previous Annuals shows a great increase in the amount of material indexed. Statistics compiled from the order department of the service show that **69 per cent more publications have been listed during the third year of the service than during the second.**

The special mission of the service is to list by subject **the more elusive material in print. A partial impression only of what the service attempts to index is, perhaps, obtained by a cursory glance at the key to periodical references, and list of books indexed. Although these are valuable features of the service, the fugitive material, including special reports, investigations, brochures, etc. represent more accurately where the staff expends the greatest effort.**

All entries do not represent printed material. Notes, announcements and digests show the trend of public thought and action, but do not refer directly to printed matter.

Special mention should be made of how **the trend of public opinion, in various States during the past year, is shown chronologically:**

1. By a subject digest of the vote at the 1916 election in various States on constitutional amendments and other measures referred to the people.
2. By a digest of the inaugural messages of the governors to the Legislatures of all the States that had legislative sessions.
3. By a partial digest of the laws enacted by the 1917 Legislatures on social and economic topics.

Each of the 490 pages of this third annual cumulation **contains from 35-45 references, approximately 20,000 entries in all. The subject-**